TRANSLATED USING GOOGLE TRANSLATE (Sorry, it’s the best I’ve got)

The meaning of the word in the Russian tales of the Baba Yaga

Juliette Drigny

Who does not associate the story with the word? Even though they are written, the tales do not

immediately arise in the reader's mind the sound of a narrative voice, from childhood or

of an older age, testifying to a bygone era when literature was oral, and society

was structured through speech. Beyond these images not devoid of a part of reverie, he told me

seemed interesting to study speech as part of the story in its own right, not as simple

means of transmission of content and information, but within the fable, as ob-

jet or event having an existence heavy with meanings. Speech is not innocent,

nor given for free. I will be mainly interested in reported speech, that is to say

schematically to the words of the characters, and not directly to the words of the storyteller or

of the narrator, even if I will have to establish bridges from one to the other.

I will first question the characteristics of the speech reported within

of the tale. What is the part of the referential illusion? How is "realism", or on the contrary

do the strangeness of the words depend on a previously fixed code, or by the genre of the tale

itself, or by an older survival, that of the rite?

Secondly, I will observe the different values of speech, from a particular angle.

of speech that poses a problem, taken as a foreign and unstable object, whether

in excess or in default. The Yaga[1] itself, as the heir to the rite, makes it possible to establish, or

at least to question its scope, or that it presents itself as the emitter of a

word, either judge, condemn or save the hero according to the words he uses.

The word in the tale: characteristics

Far from the living effect produced by the storyteller, the tales in their written form seem

on the contrary, show a certain economy of speech. Nothing superfluous is left in-

tender, and the words reported reflect only the main characteristics of the characters

of their function, as well as the main information to be transmitted. While the personage is embodied

by the voice of the storyteller, a distance remains during a silent reading. The About the characters do

not reflect any individual (idiolect) or social characteristics (sociolect). In addition, relatively uniform,

they could be interchanged between the dif-fierce heroes, between the different opponents, as well as

the characters themselves or the situations according to the diagram noted by Propp in the Morphology

of the tale[2]. The multiplication identical or almost identical formulas reveal an extremely fixed form;

but, in this set framework, the slightest variation becomes important, as for example in fairy tales

where several Yaga babas appear. In these, the hero successively meets the three sisters, older and

---

[1] 1. The tales studied will be The Baba Yaga and the Finaud, Terechetchka, The King of the Sea and Vassilissa the Wise, The
Prince Ivan and the White Sylvain, Le Cul de jatte and the Blind, Go I don't know where; bring I don't know what, Vassilissa la
beautiful (respectively tales n ° 106, 112, 219, 161, 198, 212 and 104). Unless stated otherwise, references to
these tales will be taken from Aleksandr Nikolaevič Afanas'ev: Russian Tales. Trad. by Edina Bózoki. Literatures
popular of all nations. Paris: Maisonneuve and Larose, 1978 (CR in this article).

[2] Vladimir Propp: Morphology of the tale. Points. Paris: Seuil, 1970.

older, closer and closer to the "three times ninth region ", and the few variations highlight the passage

of time and the deadline approaching.

- Well, you're not at the end of your troubles, young girl! Finist-Fier Faucon lives on the edge of the

blue sea, twenty-nine countries from here, in the thirtieth kingdom. And he's already engaged to a princess.

But I will try to help you. [...] Now you are going to go to my big sister, she will be good to you

advice. In the meantime take my present. When you weave linen with this distaff, it's a thread

of gold that is coming. [...]

- Alas, young girl! Your Finist-Fier Faucon is going to get married, this very evening we are celebrating its accords.

But I'll try to help you anyway. [...] You are going to go to my older sister, she will be

good advice. In the meantime, take this gift. Once at the edge of the blue sea, roll the egg in

edge of the saucer. [...]

- Ah, poor you, young girl! Finist-Fier Faucon married the princess just yesterday.

But I'll try to help you anyway! [...] Arriving at the edge of the blue sea, take this

loom, the needle will embroider on its own. [3]

If the repetition testifies to a codified form, from a practical point of view it has

also the interest of highlighting the singular elements, and thereby strengthening the attention

to the fable (in the sense of what serves as material for a story).

Speech in fairy tales would therefore only have a very remote relationship with the referential illusion.

tielle, or at least, if we mean mimesis, it is part of a formalization that is

[3] « La Plume de Finist Fier-Faucon ». In : Contes russes. Trad. par Luda. Illustrations d’Ivan Bilibine. ParisSorbier, 1997.

foreign, very different from that which can be read in our reference narrative genre, the

novel. The treatment of the interiority of characters is a good example of a partial form

relationship to reality. In most cases, self-talk appears as

a word or a gesture; interiority, if it exists, is always exteriorized, either verbali-

through an intermediary, or exposed through physical manifestations. Just like the

Western classical theater, the tale uses the expedient of the intermediary (the equivalent of

confidant), to reveal the thought: thus, Vassilissa the very beautiful confides her sorrows to her doll.

“Little doll, eat your fill, listen to my grief![4]

"Regularly, the opponent lets betray by his word, as in "Fédor Tougarine and Anastasia la Belle" [5]: Baba

Yaga beats his mares by ordering them to foal, so that the best gives birth to a foal mangy, and that the

hero cannot choose the best foal. But Fedor heard it all, even though the betrayal of the Yaga could

have taken place in silence, words cannot be kept not. Beyond the fact that it was important for the

progress of the tale that the hero glimpsed what was happening, a double requirement appears here –

the need, on the one hand, to support the "magic" gesture of speaking, and the impossibility, on the

other hand, of keeping what could be the order of an inner discourse.

Conversely, when thought has to be done "inside", something has to happen.

manifested in a tangible way. So, Baba Yaga interrupts Vassilissa, as if she had been able to read

physically the inner questioning of the heroine. The voice of the witch comes between break the outline

of an interiority:

---

[4] "Vassilissa-the-very-beautiful". n ° 104. In: Russian Tales, op. cit.
[5] 5. "Fédor Tougarine and Anastasia the Beautiful." No. 160. In: Afanas’ev, CR, op. cit., p. 159–164.

- Do you want to know something else?

Vasilissa thought of the three pairs of arms, but said nothing about it. Baba-Yaga said to him: "Well, you

don't ask me any more questions? "

- I know enough about myself, Grandma! You said it yourself - to know too much, we get older

quick. [6]

[6] « Vassilissa-la-très-belle », op. cit.